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A Word from the Chairman

World War I was the last time any nation equated war with glory. The causes of that war remain debatable today because the quarrels that ignited it were questionable and shallow even at the time. But once the spark was lit and Europe's armies were on the march, there was a mood of euphoria across the continent in anticipation of romance and adventure. When the fighting finally ground to a halt, when fighters were drowning in mud, stupefied by the unending slaughter, when the staggering losses on the Marne and Somme and at Ypres, Verdun, Mons, and Gallipoli were tallied, the world was stunned. The efficiency of the industrial age had reached the battlefield. Any vestige of glory that had existed in 1914 had long since been extinguished by the murderous fires of machine guns, mangling fury of modern artillery, suffocating barbarism of poison gas, and the strategy of attrition—the incomprehensible response of the generals to the new tools of war. When it was over, the only way to rationalize the carnage was to declare it the war to end all wars.

World War II was in so many respects even worse. Many more perished. But fundamentally it was different; it was not senseless. Its causes were genuine, compelling, terrifying. For countless millions it was a



*Soldier Carrying
Wounded Child*
(Leyte, October 1944)
by Paul Sample.

**World War II erased
all doubt about the
motives of aggressors**

a special place in our hearts for its veterans it is because we know that their cause was right.

But in many ways we would never be the same again. Just as World War I stripped away all innocence about the horrors of battle, World War II erased all doubt about man's potential for barbarity, the motives of aggressors, consequences of naivety, and cost of appeasement.

Nobody emerged from this war talking foolishly about it as the war to end all wars.

We learned a lot about others. We witnessed the astonishing resolve of the British who for two years refused to succumb when even staunch admirers conceded that their cause was hopeless. We developed an infatuation with Winston Churchill that still endures. Quintessentially English, he was wise, principled, urbane, dogged, and brave. We watched Britain stoically bear night after night of terror bombing, devastating losses on land and at sea, and one setback after another, never giving in to the slightest doubt or hesitation. We fought beside their soldiers, so different from our own with a non-chalant valor and dry acceptance of success and failure alike.

France was humbled more terribly than ever before in its history, swiftly defeated by a kind of war it had tragically failed to anticipate. Yet waiting in exile was a stubborn, irascible colonel, one of the few who had seen what was coming and tried valiantly to get his countrymen to listen, who then led his men in their last battle of 1940 with great courage and skill. Charles DeGaulle was the epitome of his nation's character; noble, proud, unyielding, a patriot whose all-consuming faith in France was untainted by defeat or the shame of Vichy collaboration. As he argued vehemently and often during his exile, defeat was only a temporary setback. French patriots would resist with all their might; and once free, he said passionately, France would rebound with its pride and power more intact than in the past.

struggle for survival, a desperate clash between good and evil. Its causes were forged in the angry, base mind of a murderous maniac, and in response it brought out the best in our people. Unlike World War I when this conflict ended, when the death camps were opened for all to see and the remains of thousands of innocents were discovered in the killing fields of Nanking, any lingering doubt about why we fought was washed away. Eisenhower had been right. It was a crusade, a very righteous crusade at that.

If there is a lingering sense of fondness about the war that is why. If it spawned legions of heroes, that is because their courage and prowess went to a noble cause. If there is

The Life Collection of World War II Art, U.S. Army Center of Military History

It was an outsized war fought by outsized personalities

The Soviets began the war in league with the Nazis, cutting political bargains for their own gain. Then Hitler betrayed them, and they paid a terrible price for having foolishly made a deal with that particular devil. But once that episode passed, we came to admire the mystical devotion of a tough people who took the worst punishment the Nazis offered, accepting millions, then tens

of millions of casualties, until we wondered if there were any Soviets left to fight back. But fight back they did. They swallowed one Nazi division after another, destroying each with whatever means was at hand, with the

harshness of winter, tides of poorly armed yet courageous men and women, and soon enough with battle toughened, well led units equipped with thousands of tanks and cannons. And several months after the fighting in Europe was over, the same skillful Soviet forces attacked Manchuria, hurtling the Japanese back in a lightning attack. Sadly, as soon as the war ended, the Soviets returned to those same designs that had taken them into the war.

Then, of course, there were Germany, Italy, and Japan, our enemies in those terrible years. As we fought them we convinced ourselves that they were inhuman. But when we became their occupiers and watched them struggling to survive the miseries of defeat, living in cities and towns pounded into rubble, trying to care for refugees and families torn apart by the war, while enduring severe impoverishment and scarcities with courage and sacrifice, we were reminded that they were people with a great capacity for good, indeed that it had been human failings that had carried them to such a terrible fate. Soon new leaders and new faiths took root that brought out the best in them as well. In fact, as they recovered, we gained valuable insights into their very formidable qualities. Soon all three became close allies, nations that we have since proudly served beside.

We also learned a lot about ourselves. We had our own quintessential leader, FDR, whose magnificent grin, characteristic aplomb, and unforgettable rhetoric combined to capture our hearts and minds. He had a vision for both the Nation and the world. Born a Brahman, he loved the common man and democracy with all his spirit; and these two objects of his passions were the cornerstone of his vision. That is where he differed from European leaders, who were schooled to think about the world with their intellects, not their emotions. That is precisely why our alliance was such a great marriage, combining old and new, practicality and idealism, common sense and brilliant reasoning. That is what it took to win, and to prevail so successfully after the war.

This is the second time in as many years that World War II has been the theme of a forum in *JFQ*. In truth, part of every issue could be devoted to some aspect of the war and it would still be impossible to do credit to all that has been learned and experienced from that conflict. It was an outsized war fought by outsized personalities. At one point or another, either during or after the war, it really did bring out the best in all of us. We need to remember the remarkable character of the nations we today call our allies. They are magnificent in adversity. And we need also to renew our faith in ourselves. Neither we nor our allies have changed a whit. Were another war like it to erupt today, we would be just as persevering, valiant, and noble. That is our strength.

JOHN M. SHALIKASHVILI
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of the Joint Chiefs of Staff